

January 18, 2008

**Via Facsimile and Regular Mail**

Officer in Charge – BRAC  
National Naval Medical Center  
8901 Wisconsin Avenue  
Bethesda, Maryland 20889  
Fax: (301) 295-5020

RE: Comments on the Draft Environmental Impact Statement  
Howard Hughes Medical Institute

Officer in Charge:

The Howard Hughes Medical Institute (HHMI), located in the immediate vicinity of the National Naval Medical Center (NNMC), welcomes the exciting opportunities that will be created by the relocation of the Walter Reed Army Medical Center (Walter Reed) to Bethesda. At the same time, we believe this welcome development will succeed in meeting the needs of patients, family, and staff only if potential transportation impacts are addressed in a long-term, comprehensive manner. Short-sighted or piecemeal approaches will result in further gridlock, undercutting the benefits of this consolidation for military personnel and the surrounding area.

Our comments on the Draft Environmental Impact Statement ("DEIS"), regarding the impacts of the relocation of Walter Reed to NNMC, are intended to ensure that the BRAC is implemented effectively. HHMI respects the Department of Defense's right to develop the NNMC campus in a way that meets the nation's needs. Thus, our comments are limited to the transportation impacts to the surrounding area and to the interests we share with NNMC as a major employer in the area whose operations are impacted by traffic congestion.

By way of context, HHMI is a non-profit organization that plays a major role in advancing biomedical research and science education across the U.S. It employs and supports approximately 300 investigators in Hughes laboratories at 64 distinguished U.S. universities, research institutes, and medical schools. In addition, HHMI has established a major research campus in Loudoun County, Virginia. HHMI scientists include 12 Nobel Prize winners and 121 members of the National Academy of Sciences.

Our 36.5-acre campus, located at the corner of Connecticut Avenue and Jones Bridge Road less than a mile east of the entrance to the Uniformed Health Services University, has been developed to fit within the context of the surrounding residential area. It serves as a focal point for overseeing HHMI's research and educational activities, including programs in Montgomery County and the surrounding region. For example, we have collaborated with the National Institutes of Health ("NIH") on a biomedical research program that enables medical students to work directly with NIH scientist-mentors. A number of our investigators have also collaborated with colleagues at the U.S. Army Medical Research Institute of Infectious Diseases and many have received grant support from the U.S. Navy and other defense-related funders for their groundbreaking work.

As noted, HHMI's comments on the DEIS focus on the transportation impact of the planned relocation. HHMI supports and advocates transportation improvements that will provide the greatest long-term solutions in the most economical manner. From this perspective, HHMI's comments are as follows:

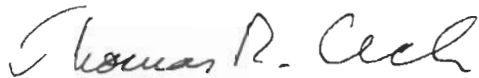
- **Slip ramp** – The final EIS should include a detailed study of a "slip" ramp connecting the NNMC campus to the Capital Beltway (I-495). Although the DEIS states that a slip ramp would not be possible given the location of other entrances and exits in the affected area, the option should receive serious and thorough study and should not be rejected out of hand. Ideally, this study would examine the potential synergies between the NNMC campus and the NIH, including the routing of NIH employees from I-495 through the NNMC campus.
- **Metrorail** - The final EIS should recommend the construction of an entrance at the southwest corner of the NNMC campus to the Medical Center Metrorail station.
- **Pedestrian Tunnel/Overpass** - HHMI further supports the construction of a pedestrian connection – in the form of a bridge or tunnel – that would link the east and west sides of Wisconsin Avenue between the NIH and NNMC campuses.
- **On-Campus Improvements** -
  - a) The final EIS should recommend a dedicated pedestrian entrance to the NNMC campus at the southwest corner of the campus to facilitate Metrorail use by campus employees and visitors. To further encourage Metrorail usage, the final EIS should provide for a pedestrian shelter and frequent shuttle bus service between this location and the main hospital structures on the NNMC campus.
  - b) The final EIS should recommend the construction of a kiss-and-ride area(s) for the pick-up and drop-off of passengers that can be accessed without entering the campus enclosure. This would be in the proximity of the additional Metro entrance (above) and would complement the Metro kiss-and-ride on the west side of Wisconsin Avenue.

- c) The final EIS should recommend specific design improvements on the NNMC campus that will alleviate vehicle queuing and other delays outside of the campus, specifically on Jones Bridge Road. The DEIS references planned queuing studies, but provides few details about how NNMC will manage traffic entering the campus.
- **Transportation Management Plan** - The final EIS should include a Transportation Management Plan with performance objectives. The DEIS outlines the potential components of such a plan, but provides no detailed information about how NNMC might implement a TMP or how a TMP would impact mass transit services in the region.
  - **Road Improvements** - Like all employers in the region –including NNMC – HHMI is concerned about traffic congestion in the residential areas surrounding NNMC and beyond. Having said that, we believe the traffic “improvements” outlined in the DEIS are largely piecemeal in nature and would fail to contribute to system-wide relief in an already congested area of Montgomery County. Intersection changes – including in the heavily residential corridor of Jones Bridge Road – are likely to be ineffective and any gains are likely to be undercut by traffic spillover from other choke points within the transportation system. We are, however, generally supportive of the proposed road improvements along the Wisconsin Avenue corridor between Woodmont Avenue and I-495, because they are intended to provide direct access to the highway without burdening the local road system.
  - **Defense Access Road Program** – The Final EIS should suggest a modification to the Defense Access Road Program (“DAR”) standard to allow federal funding for the road improvements discussed above. The current DAR standard would only permit such funding if the NNMC campus expansion were to at least double the amount of traffic on area roads. This standard, which appears tailored to address the effects of military expansions in rural areas, is inappropriate for the highly urbanized setting of the NNMC campus. We would suggest that the relocation of Walter Reed be used as an opportunity to lessen the DAR standards under NNMC’s unique circumstance in order to address the dramatic traffic impacts that will occur outside the campus gates.
  - **Community Liaison Council** - The final EIS should recommend the immediate establishment of a Community Liaison Council that would be comprised of representatives from NNMC and neighboring community groups and organizations, including HHMI. This Council would provide a regular meeting forum to address NNMC campus issues, both before and after the relocation of Walter Reed is completed. Neighborhood communication and cooperation is essential to assist NNMC in its healthcare delivery mission.

HHMI supports the relocation of Walter Reed to the NNMC campus because it will provide our nation's military personnel with the high quality medical care they deserve. Yet a piecemeal approach to identifying transportation solutions will make that mission harder to achieve while also having a significant negative impact on the surrounding area. It is critical that the final EIS reflect a comprehensive approach to ensuring the development of a robust road and transit infrastructure to support both NNMC and the NIH – two of the nation's most high profile federal installations.

We appreciate the opportunity to submit these comments on behalf of HHMI and look forward to further conversations on these vital matters.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Thomas R. Cech". The signature is fluid and cursive, with the first name "Thomas" and last name "Cech" being the most prominent parts.

Thomas R. Cech

CC: The Honorable **Isiah** Leggett  
The Honorable **Michael** Knapp  
The Honorable **Roger** Berliner  
The Honorable Royce Hanson  
The Honorable Anthony Brown  
The Honorable Barbara Mikulski  
The Honorable Benjamin Cardin  
The Honorable Christopher Van Hollen